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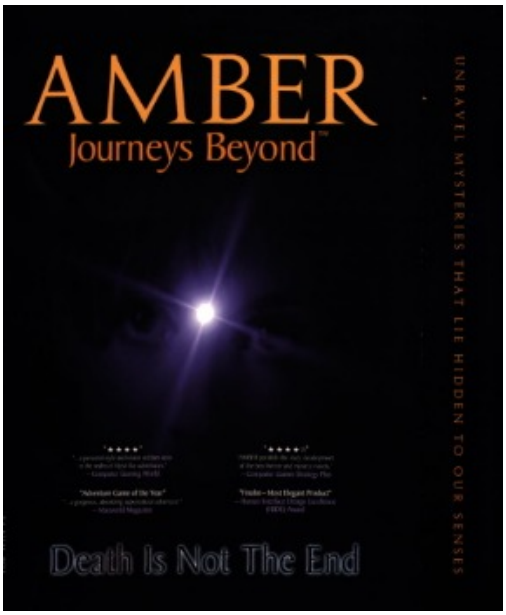
Amber: Journeys Beyond

Amber: Journeys Beyond is an American computer game released in 1996 for Apple Macintosh computers and Windows 95. It is the only game produced by Hue Forest Entertainment, founded by Frank and Susan Wimmer.

Amber: Journeys Beyond



Developer	Hue Forest Entertainment
Publishers	Hue Forest Entertainment (1996) (mail order) Cendant Software (199?) Changeling Software (199?) Graphic Simulations Corporation (199?)
Designers	Frank Wimmer, Susan Wimmer
Engine	Macromedia Director
Platforms	Mac OS System 7, Windows 95
Release	1996
Genre	Adventure
Mode	Single player

Gameplay

Amber: Journeys Beyond is a first-person point-and-click adventure game similar to *Myst*. Gameplay is nonlinear and events in the game occur at random depending on the player's progress.

Plot

Paranormal researcher Dr. Roxanne "Roxy" Westbridge (Sandi Fix) purchases a house in North Carolina believed to be inhabited by ghosts. The player character, a friend of Roxy's, is asked by a mutual contact to check on Roxy due to concerns towards her ghost hunting equipment not being properly developed. As the player character drives to the house, a ghostly apparition in the road causes them to crash into a nearby pond.

Emerging from the water, the player character explores the property and discovers Roxy unconscious in the garage with a device on her head. The player character also finds Roxy's equipment, including the unfinished Astral Mobility By Electromagnetic Resonance (AMBER) headset, which allows the user to enter the minds of ghosts. Exploring the house further, the player discovers Roxy's spirit has become trapped between realms while she was using AMBER.

The player character eventually learns the house is inhabited by three ghosts unaware of what happened to them: Margaret (Emily Andress/Susan Wimmer),[a] a woman who committed suicide after learning her husband Richard (Brendan Underhill) died in World War II; Brice (Michael Brocki), a gardener who killed his employers and their daughter Mandy (Tommi Swinson) under the delusion that they were going to be abducted by aliens before hanging himself; and Edwin (Matt Andress/Lauren Andress),[b] a young boy who drowned in the frozen pond while playing with his

talking doll Chippy (voiced by Greg Purdy) and teddy bear. Using AMBER, the player character helps each ghost remember their death, allowing them to pass on. Once the ghosts have left, AMBER gains enough energy to bring Roxy's spirit back to the natural realm.

While attempting to restore electricity to the home, the player character is electrocuted and dies, but is brought back to life by an astral figure, who tells them to save Roxy. The player character accesses Roxy's computer, which they use to recalibrate AMBER to return Roxy's spirit. Following the computer's instructions, the player character places AMBER on Roxy, causing an explosion in the garage. Roxy emerges unscathed, remarking AMBER needs more work, and asks the player character where they parked their car.

Reception

At the time of release, the game received moderate to favorable reviews from critics. Most commented that while *Amber* fell in with the pile of *Myst* clones coming out at the time, its eerie storyline and presentation to an extent offset its limited gameplay and animation and made it stand out from the rest of the pack.[1][2][3][9] A *Next Generation* critic was bothered more than most by the similarities to *Myst*, but concluded that "If you overlook the lack of originality in the game's mechanics, you might just enjoy the ride for what it's worth - a scary story told with nice graphics and some boggling puzzles."[3] Particular subjects of praise included the haunting textured environments[1][2][3][9] and ambient soundtrack.[1][5][9]

Reception

Review scores	
Publication	**Score**
Computer Gaming World	4/5 (WIN)[1]
GameSpot	7.4/10 (WIN)[2]
Next Generation	3/5 (WIN)[3]
PC Gamer (US)	53%[4]
Computer Games Strategy Plus	4.5/5 (MAC)[5]
Macworld	4/5[6]
MacHome Journal	4/5[7]
MacAddict	"Spiffy"[8]
PC Games	B–[9]

Awards	
Publication	**Award**
Macworld	"Best Adventure Game" 1996[6]
Codie awards	"Best Debut of the Year" (finalist)[10][11]

However, Robert Coffey of *Computer Gaming World* and Rebecca Anderson of *GameSpot* both also criticized that the game is too short and the final puzzle is anticlimactic,[1][2] though Anderson remarked that most of the puzzles are genuinely challenging and well-integrated with the story.[2] *PC Games*'s Shane Mooney summarized, "None too original, but it could have been worse. *Journeys Beyond* is a little better than most *Myst*-like adventure games."[9] *Newsweek* gave a positive review in their November 1996 issue. while Chuck Klimushyn of *Computer Games Strategy Plus* called *Amber* "an unassuming masterpiece".[5]

The editors of *Macworld* gave *Amber* their 1996 "Best Adventure Game" award. Steven Levy of the magazine wrote, "Strip *Myst* of its fantasy-genre trappings and replace them with a dollop of Stephen King, and you can begin to understand what it feels like to play *Amber: Journeys Beyond*—a

gorgeous, absorbing supernatural adventure." He concluded, "At its best, *Amber* fulfills some of the almost-never-realized ambitions of interactive fiction."[6]

In 2011, *Adventure Gamers* named *Amber* the 70th-best adventure game ever released.[12]

Awards

- Software Publishers Association: Excellence In Software Codie award Finalist—Best Debut of the Year
- *Macworld*, January 1997: Game Hall of Fame—Best Adventure Game of the Year[6]
- HIDE (Human Interface Design Excellence) Award Finalist—Third Place, for Most Elegant Interface
- *Computer Games Strategy Plus* February 1997: Stamp of Approval
- *MACup* Magazine, February 1997: Game of the Month

Sales

The Macintosh version of *Amber: Journeys Beyond* had disappointing sales. Jeanine DeSocio, president of publisher Changeling, attributed this to retailer reluctance to stock any Macintosh games that are not ports of high-profile PC games.[13]

Notes

a. Margaret is physically portrayed by Emily Andress and voiced by Susan Wimmer
b. Edwin is physically portrayed by Matt Andress and voiced by Lauren Andress

References

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- *AMBER: Journeys Beyond* instruction booklet
- *AMBER: Journeys Beyond*
- *AMBER: Journeys Beyond* (https://www.mobygames.com/game//amber-journeys-beyond) at MobyGames
- Hue Forest Entertainment archived website (https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.hueforest.com) at Internet Archive

External links

- *AMBER: Journeys Beyond* (https://www.mobygames.com/game//amber-journeys-beyond) at MobyGames
- *AMBER: Journeys Beyond* (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0484818/) at IMDb
- Amber Installer for Windows XP (http://www.squirtthecat.com/games/amber/index.html)

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